1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

life of the villagers—religion. Next to the mosques in appearance and cleanliness are some of the shops and stores. These must have a minimum standard of building requirements, according to official regulations. On the north side of the village stand the police station, the post office and the elementary school. As to the fields, they extend to the west of the railway road up to the Nile bank, where the water-pumping works, established in 1932, stands with its modern buildings and garden and electric light.

It is worth mentioning here that each of the ten villages constituting the administrative unit of Silwa has its own name and is separated from its neighbours, however close these may be, by a recognized boundary, e.g. a high mound, a valley, or a stretch of gravel or sand. Each of these villages (or two villages combined, as in the case of four of the villages) has its mosque and village saint tomb with a cemetery attached to it. In spite of the fact that all the villages attached to Silwa trace their origin to one ancestor, as will be discussed later, their spatial separation is associated with sub-divisions in their kinship relations.

The physical characteristics of the inhabitants of these villages show a considerable degree of homogeneity. With their dark skins and long heads, they seem to conform to the ancient Southern Egyptian type.[1] All the inhabitants of Silwa, however, take great pride in describing themselves as descendants of Arab stock related to the Prophet. They refer to their traditions and customs and even their dress as 'Arabian'. Whether their claim is true or not, the belief is of central importance as one of the cohesive forces in the village community, and it is the means by which the villagers, especially the older generation, distinguish their way of life from that of others.[2]

The rhythm of daily life in Silwa hardly varies. The crack of dawn witnesses the muazzin calling for morning prayers, youths and men, mounted on their donkeys or camels, call on each other to climb the hills to fetch the fertilizer. By sunrise, most men and boys are heading towards the fields with their cattle and tools; and by broad daylight the village seems

[1] A. Batrawi, who has studied the physical anthropology of Egyptians, maintains that there is some justification for the usual division of Egypt into Upper and Lower Regions as far as the cephalic index is concerned. The people of Upper Egypt have longer but narrower heads, and longer fingers, feet and forearms than those of Lower Egypt. His study of the living samples of modern Egyptian population from all over Egypt suggests that they conform more closely to the Ancient Southern type. Moreover, the distribution of blood groups in present-day Egypt shows that the mass of the population is very homogeneous and there are no significant differences in this respect between the Moslems and the Copts. 'The Racial History of Egypt, Part II—Relationships of the Ancient and Modern Population of Egypt and Nubia', in *Journal of Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXXVI, 1946, pp. 131–55.

[2] Arab genealogies must be accepted with great caution. The notion of the Arabs as a conquering race, known for their gallantry, honour and power, played effectively on the minds of the indigenous stock of the fellaheen, who showed an earnest desire to be considered members of that race. Many fellaheen have succeeded in linking themselves to an Arab tribe. A. Ammar, *The People of Sharqiya* (Ph.D. thesis, Manchester University), pp. 13–21.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

and evidencing practically no difference in architecture, style or number of storeys, as there are no two-storey houses in the village. Members of each sex dress more or less alike, and the observing of this convention is a very important factor in social equality. Their maxim in this connection is 'Eat what you yourself like, but dress according to what others like'. Yet all this does not mean that they are entirely identical, and the differences are usually in quantity and not in kind. The headman of the village—'Omda'—may have more clothes than others, but his clothes are the same type of clothes tailored in the same style; he may have a larger house than his neighbour but both are built in the same style with the same kind of furniture, the same sanitary arrangements and cooking facilities. The villagers do not divide themselves into 'the rich' and 'the poor'. Strengthening this sense of equalitarianism are the kinship ties where all the members of the village are inextricably connected with each other by family ties and obligations, this being reinforced by the sense of brotherhood amongst Moslems as enjoined upon them by the Koran.

With respect to the position of children in the village, they are certainly considered as an economic asset from the age of five. They constitute the labour-force in a community where hired labour is very difficult to procure. With not many expenses needed for their upbringing, and with the tangible labour they undertake, the burden of rearing children is offset; for although they are consumers, they are, even more so, contributors to the family resources. Children are also a means of providing parents with leisure and prestige, and every new child provides his or her older sibling with more opportunities for respite and leisure. Their economic contributions are enlisted by a gradual process of training, first through actual help in the farm activities, this being followed by the assignment of specific tasks to them, according to their age and physical abilities.

It must also be emphasized that these conditions and attitudes obtain in a village of small landholders. It is a matter for enquiry to find whether the same conditions prevail in villages where large-size ownership of the 'landed gentry' is the basis of economic life. It must be remembered that distribution of land in Egypt shows a great deal of unevenness. Out of 5,857,258 feddans of cultivable land in 1942, 2,160,219 feddans were owned by 12,103 persons out of the total number of owners amounting to 2,550,579. Of these owners 93 per cent held less than 5 feddans each and were in possession of only 31 per cent of the land. In 1939, owners of plots over 20 feddans constituted but 1·5 per cent of the total number of landowners, and these possessed just over 50 per cent of the total land.[1]

This system of land ownership in Egypt has nothing to do with legal Islamic institutions, apart from the Islamic law of inheritance. Such maldistribution of land is mainly due to the Ottoman regime and the reign of Muhammad Ali. The Land Code of 1858 and Land Registration Law of

[1] See *Pocket Census of Egypt*, 1948. Wendell Cleland, 'A Population Plan for Egypt', in *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, 1939.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

1859 required that land in the villages be entered in the Government Land Register. This enforcement of registration resulted in many head clans, or village sheikhs (headmen) entering as much as they could of the village land as their property; in other cases, many owners had to abandon their land for fear of taxation.[1]

Moreover the great stretches of land recovered by Muhammad Ali and his successors were given over tax free to some wealthy notables and foreigners, and this group constitutes part of the big landowners in Egypt at present.[2]

[1] Alfred Bonne, *State and Economics in the Middle East*, London, 1948.

[2] It must be noted here that after the completion of this work, the system of land ownership in Egypt has undergone radical change, a measure which was overdue for the establishment of the foundations of social justice. The abdication of ex-King Farouk and the seizure of power by the Army in July 1952 marked a new era in the life of the country. The new regime made land reform a central issue in its programme and passed the Law of Agrarian Reform. This law decreed that no landowner should possess more than 200 acres. Large estates over this size are to be expropriated with reasonable compensation for the owners. The expropriated land is to be distributed over a period of five years to landless villagers, to agricultural workers and to farmers with holdings less than five acres. For the full text of the law, see R. el-Barrawy, *The Military Coup in Egypt*, Cairo, 1952.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

due to the fact that there is no formal ceremony for the naming in Artas, as in Silwa, and hence the change is easier.

Since the enforcement of registration of births about forty years ago, the child is registered after the ceremony. It is to be remembered that still-births are not registered, and are never buried in the cemetery, but always below the threshold of the house.

The mother takes no active part in all the ceremony activities, as she is not allowed to move from her room of confinement until forty days have elapsed. As mentioned earlier, the child is considered to be guarded throughout this period by the angels, who talk to him, entertain him, and sometimes tease or even annoy him. This is the explanation of the baby's occasional smiles, as well as cries. He smiles because the angels have told him that his father is alive, and cries when they inform him that his father has died.

By the end of the forty days, the mother finishes her period of confinement and is considered to be in full control of the baby. She can move about with him and resume her ordinary domestic tasks as she becomes ceremonially clean after having her first bath, a kind of ritual cleansing.

The end of this confinement means the gradual introduction of the child to the wider family circles by taking it on visits to relatives or them visiting the house with presents. If the mother takes the child to any house, the child is never expected to leave empty-handed. Whether near or distant relatives, or of no blood connection at all, they always give the child presents varying from salt, dates, a loaf of bread, an egg, to money and more valuable things. On the birth of the first child the paternal grandfather cannot see his grandson without sending a ram or a goat before his arrival.

Another step is the introduction of the newly-born boy to the other boys in the neighbourhood. For this purpose the mother prepares a dish of boiled maize or wheat and sugar, called 'balila', and taking her child, accompanied by the children of the neighbourhood, repairs to some elevated land to eat the food. For this occasion the mother dresses in new scented clothes. For the first time also, the child wears new clothes, consisting of a white undergarment covered by a striped one, thus discarding his mother's or father's old wrappings.

It is socially encouraged that both a woman and a man should give rein to their intense desire for children. The main function of marriage is to have children and thus perpetuate family life. This shows itself in one of the condolatory phrases addressed to any offspring on the occasion of their father's death: 'He who has left successors is not dead.' My informant, Ali, said, 'A childless couple will have no "successors" to read the "Fatiha" for their souls after their death and their name will thus end by their departure from this world. Children are really useful, not only in this world but in the world hereafter. The Prophet (on whom be the peace and blessings of God) said, "Get married and multiply, as I shall take

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa
Copts MR10

APPENDIX II

few city-dwellers, as most of the products of the modern schools, are seldom acquainted with the names of these months, their functional importance is obvious to the greater part of the Egyptian rural population.

For the village boys, the memorizing of these month-names is greatly helped by the descriptive rhyming phrases that connect them with such significant climatic changes or agricultural events. The table opposite shows the Coptic months and the corresponding dates of the European calendar, as well as the Lunar calendar.

The following are the rhyming phrases connected with the Coptic months. It is to be noticed that they are connected either with the climatic conditions or with wheat in winter, or a kind of millet (different from the one grown after perennial irrigation was introduced) called 'damirl' and which used to be grown in autumn, lasting for two months.

Toot:
He is a fool who expects flood in Toot.

Babah:
If the millet's cob is not fully ripe in this month, not much harvest is to be expected.

Hatoor:
Hatoor calls the cold to commence.

Kiyah:
Compels the barking dog to sleep.[1]

Toobah:
In Toobah my ankle has never been wetted by water.[2]

Amsheer:
The first ten of Amsheer makes one's skin shiver (chopped).

Baramhat:
One can enter the field and get corn (corn begins to ripen).

Baramoudah:
The corn is gathered into heaps.

Bashans:
The chaff is taken away from the sun (loaded home).

Baoonah:
Full of hardship, and it is not advisable to eat eggs or fish (due probably to the excessive heat).

Abeeb:
One does not find it difficult to get dates.

Misri:
Between Misri and Abeeb, send they joy-cries, O beloved (the peak of the Nile flood). This applies, of course, to the days of the basin irrigation,

[1] One of the boys added that in Kiyah the sleeping dog brings his head nearer to his tail.
[2] This is the period of drought called 'gafaf' during which the government allows no water to remain in the canals so that they may be cleaned out; thus water is not available for irrigation.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

far as I know, from private individuals. It is very different in England, where the hospitals for children and adults alike are supported by voluntary contributions. It is not that charity is lacking in Egypt—far from it; but for *organized* charity such as we have in England there is a crying need.

It is not altogether surprising, considering the state of ignorance in which they exist, that the mental outlook of most of the villagers is low. As far as the women are concerned, there is nothing to raise it. Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve. Thus the children from their very early years hear subjects spoken of and joked about in a manner that is most revolting to educated people. What chance have the children in such circumstances of growing up into pure-minded men and women? I am told (for such conversation rarely takes place in my presence) that the women are far greater offenders in this respect than the men, who usually refrain from discussing their wives with outsiders. Whether this is true or not I am not in a position to say, but at any rate the children, and especially the girls, who are more constantly with their mothers than the boys, hear the most private sexual matters openly discussed, and in such a way as to poison their minds at the very outset of their lives. Marriage is, of course, the one and only aim in life among the girls, and the desire to get a husband is encouraged in every way by the mothers. It is quite a pitiful sight to see a little girl decked out in all the jewellery she can muster, dressed in a gaily coloured frock decorated with beads and jangles (Fig. 17), and with a veil drawn coquettishly across her face, standing about the village street, or outside the house, obviously on the look-out to attract some man. In all this they are aided and abetted by their mothers, who regard it as a compliment to themselves as well as to their daughters if the latter are sought after as wives at an early age. The Egyptian Government is endeavouring to prohibit the very early marriages which have been usual in the past, and there is now a law forbidding a girl to marry till she is sixteen and a boy till he is eighteen. However, in small, out-of-the-way villages the law has been disobeyed to my certain knowledge in more than one case. False ages were, I suppose, given to the *ḳāḍi*, as the man who draws up the marriage contracts is called; and he, in view of the fee he

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER VII

DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

WHEN a male or female Muslim is dying it is the custom to give him or her some water to drink. So far, despite careful inquiries, I have discovered no definite belief associated with the practice; all that I have been told is that it is a custom that must always be observed. It may originally, perhaps, have been a purificatory or vivificatory rite. In certain parts of Egypt it is the custom for some of the people sitting or standing near a person who is *in extremis* to squeeze his or her body with their hands, in order to force the soul out of it. Men do this for a man and women for a woman. When death has actually taken place the eyes and mouth of the deceased are closed, and the legs drawn down straight and laid close together. The body is then washed, the water for this purpose being obtained, if possible, from a mosque or from some sacred well or pool connected with a sheikh. In Upper Egypt the corpse may be washed by a *fikīh*, who takes as payment all the clothes of the deceased, and also the remains of the soap used in the washing.

As Egypt is a very hot country burial takes place very shortly after death. For instance, if a death has occurred in the morning or early afternoon the funeral takes place the same day. On the other hand, if death resulted from some injury due to accident or an act of violence burial is not permitted till the Government doctor and police officials have made full investigations.

If some one is dying in the village the news soon spreads, and friends and relations flock in crowds to the house. The moment the breath is out of the body female relatives and a number of professional mourners begin to shriek and scream (Fig. 50). Many of them leave the house of death and perambulate the village seven times, uttering the while piercing cries, and waving handkerchiefs, usually black, blue, or green in colour, as they go along. This perambulation of wailing women is not, anyhow at the present day, consciously associated with any idea of driving the spirit or

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

done so, but that he had dropped it inside his trunk. He went back to the school, searched his trunk carefully, and found the key, as the man had told him he would.

The *zār* is not necessarily followed by the ceremony called the *ṣulḥeh*; this takes place when a sheikh has troubled a man or woman for some time, and at last becomes appeased. It is a form of peace-making between the sheikh and the person he possesses. If anyone is possessed by more than one sheikh it is not necessary to kill more than one sheep at the *ṣulḥeh*; one victim appeases them all.

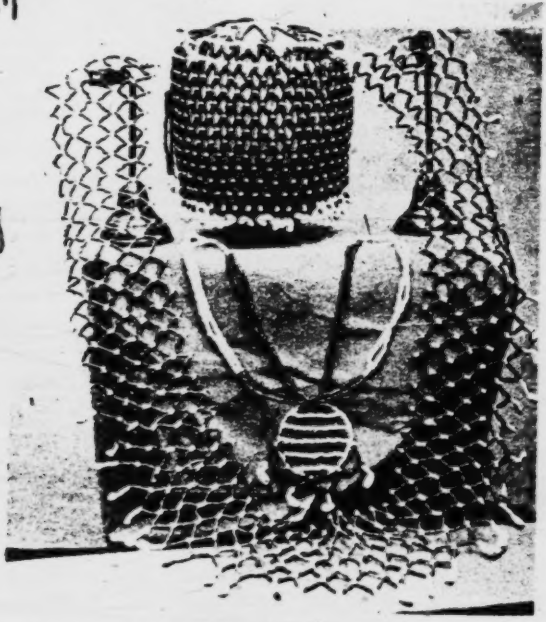

FIG. 120. ORNAMENTS—BELT, PENDANT, AND CAP—SOMETIMES WORN BY A WOMAN AT A ZĀR
The beads are green and white.

This belief, that it is possible to be thus possessed by a sheikh, is a very baneful one. The women who suppose themselves to be thus affected become exceedingly hysterical, and their husbands, for fear of the consequences, are put to great expense. The officials are quite rightly trying to put an end to the holding of the *zār*, but to suppress this ceremony completely will be difficult, as the beliefs associated with it are so deeply rooted in the peasants' minds.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Egypt MR1
Turkish Egypt MR2

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F
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In Egypt the productive area of about 11,000 square miles, representing a value of L.E. 435,000,000, is divided into State Lands (*miri*), entailed estates (*wakfs*) and private property (*milk*).

The State and the Land

T
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175
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651
643

In 1813 Mohammed Aly, the founder of Modern Egypt (1769-1849), after seizing the possessions of the Mamelukes, divided their lands into village districts and distributed them to the villagers. Each cultivator thus obtained from three to five feddans in usufruct. Until 1840 he was subject to the system of monopoly. He had to deliver all his cotton to the Government dépot at an official figure lower than the market price. On grain, which he was allowed to sell in the free market, he had to pay a tax of 18 piastres an *ardeb*. According to Moslem law the Sovereign — formerly the Sultan, Commander of the Faithful, but now his emancipated Viceroy — remained sole owner, in God's name, of all conquered land. However, estates conferred by former Sultans on private individuals, or granted to tax-payer farmers, and also *wakf* property, remained outside his control. Moreover, vast areas still uncultivated were excluded from the survey, exempt (until 1858) from taxation, and allotted with full rights of ownership to notables, high officials, or members of the ruling house, who were in a position to bring them under cultivation. This is the origin of the large estates.

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651
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Small property came into being by a slow process which began with the subdivision of the land. In 1846 a fellah enjoying the usufruct of a plot was authorised to part with it by title-deed, while still retaining without question his right to re-acquire it. In the same way, after eviction for arrears of taxes, if later he could pay off the debt he could take back his field. Later on the children of the usufructuary were allowed to take over their fathers' fields; but this was only by Government concession, not by right of inheritance.

T
F
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In 1871 Ismail Pasha, hard pressed by debt, offered full ownership of their plots to all tenants who would pay six years' taxes in advance. This law met with only partial success, and was repealed in 1880. But the principle of fellah ownership was established; and the Government con-

423 The great estates lie chiefly in Upper Egypt and in the
427 newly reclaimed areas of the Delta. They do not always remain under the same ownership, and certain estates have changed hands six times in twenty years, without, however, any variation in their methods of working.

The great landowners run their estates indirectly by the help of their *daira* and of *nâzirs* in the same way as companies such as the Kom Ombo Sugar Factories, banks such as the *Crédit Foncier* and the Land Bank, the large *wakfs* and the State Domains.

The *daira* is the town office for administration and accountancy. It makes orders and purchases, arranges advances and sales and pays the taxes.

The *nâzir*, a bailiff or agent, is the owner's representative on the estate and is the real executive, on whom the whole system depends for its working. He is as obsequious to his master as he is stern to the fellaheen. His business is to exert all possible pressure on the agricultural machinery, that is, the fellaheen, in order to increase the output. He is like a saw that cuts both ways, as his victims put it. He controls the ploughing, manuring, sowing and harvesting by a rule-of-thumb routine. However, landowners would rather rely on his experience than employ agricultural engineers, who are not yet taking the part for which they are qualified in Egyptian rural affairs.

[643] On the State Domains and the estates of the King and Princes the management is more varied. The different services are grouped in a *tefteesh* or inspectorate, and installed in an *ezba*.

361 The *ezba* is an inseparable part of the larger estates.
656 It is a homestead for the estate workers, separated from the village, and constituting a hamlet which belongs entirely to the estate owner. This arrangement, which is less than a century old, was legally established in 1913, and modified slightly in 1933.

"No *ezba* may be established on any estate without the consent of the Provincial Council, which should take into consideration the extent of the petitioner's estate, its distance from the village, and the number of farm labourers to be housed there." For the law is still valid which forbids "the building, by whosoever it may be, of any manner of dwelling upon cultivated land outside the recognised village area".

423 425 426 Small properties do not result solely from the subdivision of inheritances, but also from the acquisition of tiny plots as money becomes available. The fellah is so hungry for land that he buys it, more often than not, at a ruinous price; this is also partly because he buys only a few *kirats* at a time. In order to pay for it he supplements his savings by contracting a debt.

423 425 426 556 The demand is so high that the lots are sold for the best price offered, and, in forced sales, by auction. Here is an example of what may happen. Ten feddans are on sale for L.E. 400. A dozen fellaheen join together to buy them at that price, and divide them up among themselves. But a rich landowner of the neighbourhood gets wind of the business. He arrives a few hours before the sale and sits down at a café in full view of everybody. He boasts openly that he is ready to buy the lot at no matter what price. The fellaheen, threatened with disappointment, come up and beg him to withdraw, offering money as compensation. He lets them plead, bargains with them, then pockets his gains and leaves the village, in high glee at the success of his stratagem, which he will repeat when opportunity offers. The fellaheen, who have given him L.E. 10 for nothing, think the bargain good.

The Government

●656 [312] The Government, by its control of the land, and still more of the water, is supreme over capital and labour, and over the peasant class. As master of the irrigation system, it assumes for the fellah all the power and importance of the Nile. The more the State regulates the river, the greater the dependence on it of both soil and men of the soil.

As Egypt is an agricultural country, almost every Government organisation is, in the long run, giving orders to the fellah. In industry and in the large towns, the Government willingly entrusts the public services to private enterprise. In agricultural matters, on the contrary, it assumes many functions which in other countries are undertaken by private persons. So much so that for the rural population the Government is a kind of overriding providence, while the fellah is regarded by the Government as a helpless child, who has constantly to be ordered about and protected from his own ignorance.

The Ministry of Public Works controls the irrigation of 656
all cultivated land, settles the rotation of crops for each zone, watches over the embankments and canals, and, if the Nile threatens to break its banks, recruits the fellaheen necessary for their maintenance.

The Ministry of Agriculture regulates the acreage of cotton and rice, distributes and controls the selection of cotton seed, and levies the fellaheen needed to fight the boll worm or the locust.

The Ministry of Finance collects the land-tax through 651
its *sarrafs* in each district, issues orders for seizures, buys 656
cotton to maintain equilibrium in the home market, and 657
by means of the *Crédit Agricole* attempts to systematise the finances of the fellah.

The Ministries of Education and Public Health oblige 871
the fellah to improve his mind and his physique.

The Ministry of Justice, through the district courts, 692
— and after agelong delays — condemns or acquits him.

The Ministry of National Defence arranges for his en- 702
interest, or collects the exemption fine.

The Ministry of the Interior, acting in the common 656
interest, supports all this network of regulations and so ensures order and public security.

The Government system in its present form is less than 175
a century old. It was established by Mohammed Aly, 64
and has changed little in its working since. He did not so much create the machinery which deals with the fellah as systematise it after the disastrous and arbitrary rule of the Turks and Mamelukes. The founder of the reigning House thus raised over the heads of the fellaheen a system of law and order which makes it possible for them, if not to progress, at least to live.

Let us examine this hierarchy from top to bottom, and consider the relations of each authority with the fellah.

First of all comes the King. The last two sovereigns 643
(not to mention others) have sincerely desired the well-being 645
of the fellah, and frequently given proof of this desire. Their Ministers, however, are often more occupied with politics than with government, and travel far more in Europe than in the

241 312 wheel carrying a long chain of pots which move mouth downward into the water to fill, and then tip out their water into the channel as they arrive at the top. The *saqia* and the Archimedean screw have been continuously in use since the times of the Ptolemies.

[471 476] A *saqia*, costing as it does from L.E. 10 to L.E. 20, according to its depth, is often the common property of several families. Each family in turn brings its own beast to draw water, and the work goes on without any break. One feddan can be irrigated in this way in 24 hours, and one *saqia* can supply five feddans.

The fellah's task is to goad the animal, to watch the turning of the wheel and the flow of water, and to avoid wastage on the way to the field, which may be anything up to three furlongs away. Usually an old man or a child is [887 857] left in charge, and as the ungreased wheels continue their ceaseless groaning, the child hums for joy at every movement he makes.

The *saqia*, with variations such as the *taboot* or water-wheel, is found in its thousands all over Egypt. Under the name of *noria* it is used by peasants in Syria, North Africa, Spain, Italy and Greece.

It is clear that the business of watering makes very great demands on the fellah's energy and endurance. Yet he is not satisfied with the strict minimum, and is often accused of giving the soil too much water.

[242] He does not understand that frequent and copious watering raises the underground water-level, and that when this reaches four feet below the surface it stifles the roots and makes the plants turn yellow. He only knows the evil effects of drought. So when his turn comes he never wastes a moment, but gives his crop as much water as he can. To him, lack of water means a failure or at least a low crop; and that means poverty. There is no question that innumerable troubles and anxieties beset the fellah in his efforts to get the water which he needs for his little plot. The [656] overseers of irrigation in the provinces and the watchmen whose duty it is to see to the opening of sluices often disregard the orders and regulations which assure a just supply. In this matter favouritism, injustice and even personal spite are often indulged in with impunity.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

assign to each month its proper task. Wheat, which at that time was the main crop, is frequently mentioned, but the new-fangled cotton not at all [24].

This same calendar also regulates the Coptic ecclesiastical year, for when Christianity came to Egypt it made no change in the existing customs. The reckoning begins from A.D. 284, the first year of Diocletian's reign, called 'The Year of the Martyrs'. In actual fact, the great persecutions took place in A.D. 304.

Moslems, on the other hand, start from the *hegira*, or Flight of the Prophet (622 A.D.), and count in lunar months.

Since 1875, Egypt has officially employed the Gregorian Calendar, which is gradually penetrating everywhere. The Government has not kept the ancient Egyptian names for the months, nor has it translated the Roman names. It has simply taken over their popular adaptations as follows: - *yanayer, febrayer, mâris, abrîl, myo, yûnyo, yûlyo, oghostos* and so on. The Ministry of Agriculture works by this calendar to the exclusion of the other two, and so, if not actually used by all the fellaheen, it is understood by most of them.

At this point it will be convenient to describe the principal crops of contemporary Egypt, which are also those at which most of the fellaheen work, namely cotton, which is the main source of the country's wealth; maize and wheat, which provide its daily bread; and *berseem*, the fodder of its cattle. Of the rest we shall say only a word or two in passing.

A. THE "GARDENING" OF THE COTTON PLANT

Cotton was not unknown to the Ancient Egyptians. Some fabrics of Pharaonic times seem to be woven of cotton thread, and Pliny mentions its use. Its development in Egypt for industrial purposes took place in the mid-nineteenth century after the experiments of Jumel. Perennial irrigation, introduced about the same time, together with the increase of the population, and the advantageous openings on the English market, very soon made cotton the principal crop of the country. The world crisis of 1930, which led to a slump in cotton, forced the Egyptian Government to restrict it to a quarter of the total cultivated area. Despite

248 this control cotton remains the staple crop of Modern Egypt,
656 It is planted in every *mudiriya* from Beheira to Aswan.

First of all, to avoid intermixture of varieties, which would lower the quality and ruin the reputation of its long-staple cottons, the Ministry of Agriculture takes over the control of all seed from the time of ginning. The fellah buys his seed well in advance from agents of the Royal Agricultural Society, the *Crédit Agricole* or ginning firms. When the
248 field has been prepared by two or three cross-ploughings and divided into furrows, he brings the seed for planting. Then he pushes a few seeds at a time, from six to ten according to the variety, into small holes set about eight inches apart on the southern edge of the furrow and made with a sort of dibble, which also serves as a measuring stick. A fortnight later he visits his seedlings, and near any holes which show no signs of growth he plants more seeds, which he waters by hand. After six weeks the young plants are grown and are even too close. The fellah proceeds to thin out the clusters, leaving in each hole two plants only, and rooting out all the rest. Meanwhile he irrigates the fields, every 15 to 25 days in May and June, and every 12 to 15 days in July. After seeing that every furrow gets its complement of water he uproots the weeds and strips the top bud from each plant, so as to improve the growth of the cotton by preventing the stem from growing too tall. In this way thousands of square miles are not so much farmed as gardened.

248 Like gardening, cotton cultivation demands abundant
461 labour at command. It therefore presupposes, or produces,
464 a dense population, unless machinery makes up the shortage, as in the United States. It is all the easier to obtain the large number of workers required, as the work itself is easy. Women and children here are as good as men, and increase the family's earnings. This fact has contributed largely to the success of cotton in Egypt.

After a brief flowering, which begins in July, the pod bursts open, then the fruit develops and is ready for picking. Twice between the end of August and early October, the whole of the village, divided into gangs under the harrying orders of overseers (*rayess*), sets to work picking the cotton. There
[533] is a recognised chanter of work-songs, to the rhythm of whose music the white tufts of the cotton plant must be deftly stripped off. None must be missed, yet not a single

part *berseem*, and part wheat for the winter. The *berseem* 427
is consumed by his cattle, the wheat produces 2½ *ardebs*, 243
selling at about L.E. 6, but the landowner keeps back L.E. 4 248
of this as the second instalment of rent.

The tenant then plants his maize for the *nili* crop on his two feddans, but before the harvest he must pay the balance of his rent (L.E. 2) to the owner, and can then take the maize for himself. In fact it is only the yield of this last crop which really belongs to the fellah and his family. After setting aside enough to feed his family, he sells what is left. If all goes well he may be about L.E. 6 to the good.

But all may not go well. If the crop has been poor, or 427
there was a blight, or the crop has been badly sold, the tenant 731
must still pay the full rent, as provided in Article 392 of the 656
Egyptian Civil Code. Ruin is the result. Sometimes (e.g. in the three years from 1929 to 1932) catastrophe has been so general that the Government has had to issue decrees for the reduction of rent in a proportion of 25% to 40% according to the date of contract. The State cannot always intervene, and owing to the keen demand land is rarely let except at high rents. The consequences for the fellah are frequently disastrous.

One unhappy tenant farmer, whose *gamoossa* had just 427
been seized, explained the situation to an inquirer in these 511
words:

"I hired two feddans at L.E. 12 apiece. On each I spent L.E. 5 in seeds, manures and so on, not to mention my labour, that of my children, and the help of my animals throughout the year. What is the result? One feddan yielded four *cantars* of cotton, which sold at L.E. 12. The other produced five *ardebs* of corn and seven of maize, which brought me L.E. 13. Out of this L.E. 25 I had already spent L.E. 10, so how could I pay my rent of L.E. 24? I had to sell the *gamoossa*."

"But if you only lose, why continue to rent land?"

"Because farming is the job I learnt from my fathers, and I don't know how to do anything else."

"But why rent land at such a high price?"

"Because the local landowners have conspired to keep the prices up, and the fellaheen do not know how to get them lowered."

in the village, while the *Crédit Agricole* takes it at only 150 kg. as in the cities, and advances 130 piastres (1937 prices) on each *ardeb*.

Your cunning merchant proceeds to deposit the wheat, which he pretends to have harvested, in the *shoonas* of the bank. He thus gains 10 piastres and 25 kilogrammes of wheat on each *ardeb* bought, and without assuming any risks himself can confidently expect an additional premium at the time of sale by the *Crédit Agricole*.

There are no walls but only low ridges or channels dividing the fields of Egypt. In the same way there is no sharp division between the various kinds of labour which we have just been analysing. None of these categories is self-sufficient, and each overlaps the next. There are few fellaheen who do not pass from one to another, or belong at the same time to two of them. The very conditions of the fellah's life imply a certain similarity in them all.

(1) *Poverty*. Because he knows nothing of either foresight or economy, and even more because he is weak, isolated and ignorant, the strong and the rich reap the fruits of his labours. The bank or the moneylender, the Government, the *omda*, or the landowner, gathers in most, if not all, of what he has sweated to produce. He himself, to use one of his own sayings, remains "poor as a needle, which clothes others but itself remains unclad".

(2) *Dependence*. The fellah can plant neither what he wishes nor when he wishes. As a day-labourer he works in a gang at a definite task under the strictest supervision. As tenant farmer or share-cropper he plants his crops according to the owner's plan. As landowner he is dependent with regard to dates and choice of crops on the orders of the Ministry of Agriculture. He has no sort of liberty or initiative one way or the other.

(3) *The minimum standard*. However bad his affairs may be, the fellah is at least certain of his daily bread. No-one actually starves to death in the country; for even under the worst conditions of labour the natural resources of the land remain.

(4) *Family Labour*. The help given to the fellah by his family must never be lost sight of. Among the Egyptian peasantry, wife, children, *gamoossa* and donkey make up

be feared. the village may stand on the level of the fields, barely visible, though always very compact.

A village may be situated anywhere. There is always water near, the soil and the contour of the land scarcely vary, so that the geographer cannot lay down hard and fast rules in explanation. History might have something to say on the subject, but who will ever know the past of those four thousand villages scattered far and wide along the Nile Valley? Their congestion, however, can be explained.

Not a square inch of ground must be wasted, especially if it is rich and well watered. In order to keep the cultivated area as large as possible, the unproductive space covered by human dwellings is reduced to a minimum. As we have seen, up to the nineteenth century the land and its cultivators belonged to the State and a few big landowners. The fellaheen had no interest in living on isolated farmsteads, all the more so because in that troubled period plundering Arabs or highway robbers would soon have despoiled them.

Moreover the village was the official unit for taxes, recruiting, judicial enquiries and the survey, so that it was essential for the villagers to remain within it. For these reasons, which still hold good today, the Government would not allow them to settle outside the village area.

These motives are now reinforced by certain new factors, such as the increase of population, the high price of land, and lack of space. The 1907 survey fixed the boundaries of the village areas once and for all.

A village may contain anything from a few hundred to several thousand inhabitants — 15,000 is not an uncommon figure — but it will always seem no more than one large family. Nothing is more like one Egyptian village than another Egyptian village. Here is another example of the monotonous uniformity which we have so often had cause to mention. There is a difference between the villages of Upper and Lower Egypt, as there is between the fellaheen of the two regions, but the likeness between them is far more striking. If an Egyptian of the older generation is shown photographs of several villages and asked whether they belong to Upper Egypt or the Delta, he will frequently give the wrong answer.

This is because the same kind of people and the same manner of life make for the same sort of villages. When

731 and to the whole village. A spark from oven orstove in
[372 the burning heat of summer is enough to bring disaster.
488] Village fires, by their size and frequency, constitute one of the plagues of the Egyptian countryside. Between 1926 and 1930 sixty-six places were destroyed in this way, and every year, especially between April and September, the Public Security Department has appalling damage to report. To give an idea of its extent, here are four incidents of recent years:

1. January 14, 1936. Village of Mit Yaish, in the Markaz of Mit Ghamr. "The fire spread with terrifying speed, ending in the destruction of 94 houses. Hundreds of fellaheen are homeless."

2. April 22, 1936. El Muassaga, in the Markaz of Hehia. "The fire spread to 43 houses, which were reduced to ashes, with all the cattle, poultry and foodstuffs they contained. Losses were estimated at L.E. 300. The enquiry has proved that the fire was started by a woman of the village, named Nefissa Hassan, who was cooking in her home. A few sparks fell on the brushwood on the roof, and with the help of the wind the fire quickly spread."

3. May 5, 1937. "A terrible fire broke out in Bakanûsh, in Dessûq Markaz in the Mudiriya of Gharbiya. Five hundred houses were completely destroyed; 14 people were burnt alive, and 13 others who were rescued are suffering from severe burns."

4. January 14, 1941. "Fire broke out in the village of Deir, in the Markaz of Toukh, destroying 217 houses, causing 20 deaths, burning crops and cattle, and leaving 400 families destitute. The cause was a woman cooking on the roof."

● 656 There is indeed a regulation which forbids 'the storing of
731 brushwood on the flat roofs of houses', and a "Committee for Fighting Fires in the Countryside". But no regulation or committee can stop the fellah from storing his fuel on the roof, unless he is given the means of storing it elsewhere. He is similarly advised not to sleep with his cattle, but if he left them outside they would be stolen, and inside there is so little room.

353 What use does he make of the space available? If we go inside, we shall at once notice the darkness and the smell, if not the fleas. The house consists of a single room, sixteen to twenty feet by ten or twelve. "When

donkey to the fields and the *gamoosa* to the canal, where he climbs on its back and sets it turning the *saqia*. The child learns how to cry out, how to chase off thieving birds with stones, how to pick and even plant cotton. He does not lack amusement, for he has plenty of companions. During the day, when the men are toiling in the fields and the women are busy in the house or by the canal, the whole village belongs to the children. It is they whom a visitor sees first. They paddle stark naked in the pond, and learn to swim. They have bulging bellies, for they eat anything and everything. They play in the dust, spinning an onion as a top, hopping on one leg and holding the other heel with their hands, or shooting with a catapult (*nibla*) at date-palms or birds. When they are a little older they play at *sîga*, a kind of marble game with small pebbles which have to be moved into forty-nine holes made in the sand.

At about the age of seven the young fellah is circumcised, and thus introduced into the world of men. At this stage he has to go to the elementary school (*ilzamiya*), at least in the mornings. His parents are bound to send him, under pain of a fine of twenty piastres, or fifty for a second offence. 95% of the fellaheen are illiterate, and the Government wishes to wipe out this disgrace from the next generation. The 1923 Constitution decreed that education should be compulsory, but it is only since 1935 that this order has begun to take effect. Schools are being established all over the countryside. Gradually sites are being found in the villages, schools set up, and teachers appointed. Every year, places that within living memory had never seen a teacher are provided with a complete teaching staff. In 1946 there should be 4,600 free elementary schools, and the whole child population will be receiving instruction ([1]).

The parents do not understand these new ideas. Though accustomed to other tyrannical institutions, they do not resign themselves to this. Some Upper Egyptians of 'Ezbet Balkan, who had been fined for not sending their children to the compulsory Government school, attacked the teachers and wounded them. The peasants care little for education. They only want their children to help them to increase their earnings. Moreover, most villages are still served, according to the ancient system, by a *kuttab*, in which a blind teacher, seated on the ground, gathers a few children round him and teaches them the Koran.

474 existed in Egypt for the last twenty years. The Government recognised them officially by the Law of 1923 (amended in 1927). It made advances to encourage their development and enable them to buy seed, manure, cattle, and implements, on better terms. Since 1931 it has entrusted this task to the *Crédit Agricole*. The change was successful. The number of societies grew from 147 in 1927 to 703 in 1935, and the number of co-operators rose from 12,298 to 71,000. In 1935 L.E. 836,000 was borrowed from the *Crédit Agricole* by 544 of these societies, the others being financed by private capital.

The advantages of these societies are evident. They do away with shady middlemen, systematise production and prices, improve both quality and quantity, and buy and sell at the best conditions (¹⁰). They have a clearly-defined aim of social service. "The various types of co-operative societies, put aside part of their profit every year to be spent in the various social services, village reform, education, hygiene" and so on.

It is in Lower Egypt, and especially Beheira, that these organisations have spread most. In spite of their success they leave untouched the vast majority of the fellaheen, especially those whose need is greatest and among whom the co-operative spirit is least developed.

● 656 The Government has passed a number of measures for the protection of these grown-up children :

[426] (1) The law against moneylenders (1896) by which the usurer, who goes too far, is made liable to a heavy fine.

[659] (2) The establishment of *halâka* cotton markets (1912) in which weights are checked and sales governed by current prices at the Bourse.

[651] (3) The suppression of the tax on date-palms (1920).

(4) The suppression of the *ghafîr* tax, a watchman's toll which the fellaheen had to pay (1936).

744 657 If the fellah's economic activity needs to be organised and controlled by the paternal providence of the State, how much more do his health and his housing ! But here planning is far ahead of achievement. The question is whether to begin by providing all villages with drinking-water, or first to build model villages whenever possible.

511
735 is of graver consequence for the individual than for the group. In this poverty the fellah is too rich.

181 His ignorance and backwardness, his churlishness and servility, which contrast so strikingly with the refinement of the upper classes, are more tragic than his lack of means.

The fact that he does not feel the depth of his suffering is no reason why it should seem any the less degrading. On the contrary, when he feels it more keenly and becomes fully conscious of it, his deliverance will be on the way.

184 The real evils, then, are the fellah's lack of education
212 and culture, and the incomprehension or inaptitude, if not scorn and indifference, of those who might be helping him.

● 656
746 The greater number of official measures, for example, are thought out in offices quite remote from the fellaheen, and put into practice by officials who have nothing of the countryman in them. Whether they are concerned with health or education, agriculture or justice, they spring more from theory or from imitation of other countries than from a practical knowledge of the true state of affairs. Their starting-point is not the way of life and thought of the fellah, but a preconceived ideal. They are too interfering, and are imposed on the fellah in a hard, threatening manner. They are planted on him from outside, without ever arousing his interest or enlisting his help, so that he is unable to believe that the Government is genuinely trying to do him a service. And his distress remains the same as ever.

Here lies the explanation of the amazing series of failures which makes the pessimists say "It is no use doing anything for the fellaheen". Experience shows, however,
747 that private organisations of limited scope and resources, because they are working *with* the fellah and not merely *for* him, because they advise instead of commanding, and promise instead of threatening, have been able to gain his confidence, and in spite of unavoidable false starts have achieved excellent results.

One example is the model village of the Royal Agricultural Society, mentioned in the previous chapter. The finishing touch was put to this in December 1941 by the establishment of a 'Social Centre'.

Another case is the happy experiment tried on a large *'ezba* of 1600 feddans in Beheira, where the landowner, a